State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Subject: Protection options for your school well

Dear Principal or School Administrator:

This letter has been prepared to help you and your school use your Source Water Assessment to consider what steps might be appropriate to protect your school's water supply well. Included below are some options for you to consider, based on the information in your school's assessment, for protecting your water supply. Also included are education ideas that can raise student and staff awareness of groundwater and drinking water protection.

Your school's assessment contains a map for each well showing the source water area (the area contributing recharge to your well) and the location of any potential contaminant sources within this source water area. (Read the Sensitive Information paragraph of your assessment regarding sharing location information.) The portion of your source water assessment titled Well Susceptibility to Contamination describes the level of susceptibility (low, moderate or susceptible) of your well to six classes of contaminants and the reason for the susceptibility determinations.

If your well has low susceptibility to all contaminants, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has concluded that the potential for contamination of your well or wells is small. I invite you to look at the protection options below to see if there are steps that could be taken to further protect your well. Also consider the education options listed at the end of this letter to increase environmental awareness in your school.

If your source water assessment shows that your well is susceptible or moderately susceptible to one or more contaminants, use the assessment and this letter to decide on actions to reduce or eliminate those potential contaminants. The first priority would be the contaminants for which your well is "susceptible". Those contaminants to which your well is "moderately susceptible" would be a lower priority.

Read the assessment to identify the reason or reasons why your well was considered susceptible or moderately susceptible and to which contaminants. This can help determine appropriate options to consider in developing a plan to protect your well. A number of possible actions are listed below. Please note that not all of these may be appropriate for your particular situation, nor is this list intended to be all-inclusive.

PROTECTION OPTIONS FOR YOUR SCHOOL WELL

- Determine if the potential contaminant sources identified for your well in your Source Water Assessment are correct. Eliminate or remove the potential contaminant(s) if possible.
- Look at practices in and around the school to see if there are opportunities to minimize potential contaminants that could seep into the soil and ultimately to the groundwater aquifer that supplies your well:
  - If your school has a grass yard, consider using less (or no) pesticides and fertilizers.
  - Check with your County Extension Agent for recommended best management practices for lawn care or prairie planting options that do not require pesticides or fertilizers.
  - Check to make sure that chemicals or waste products aren't stored outside or disposed of outside on the ground.

- If your school has a septic system, make sure it is properly maintained and pumped out on a regular basis. Inventory the materials disposed of into the septic system to make sure there aren't any chemicals or hazardous materials that can enter the septic system and end up in groundwater.
- For those threats off your property but within your source water area, meet with the person who owns the potential source (e. g., a farmer, gas station owner) and talk with him or her about the proximity of their activity to your well and the importance of protecting your well. You could work with your City, Village or Township to help in this effort.
- Consider purchasing property to increase the area under your control around the school.
- Ask your WDNR Water Supply Specialist to check your well to make sure it meets code requirements to minimize the potential for contaminants to get into your well. If it doesn't, upgrade your well construction as necessary. Ask whether it would make sense to extend the casing in your well, deepen your well or drill another well to provide more protection from infiltration of contaminants to groundwater. Look for the well construction log for your well, if the WDNR doesn't have it, and provide it to your WDNR Water Supply Specialist.
- Talk with your WDNR Water Supply Specialist about the merits of installing one or more monitoring wells between your school well and potential contaminant sources to detect groundwater contamination before it reaches your well.
- Develop a contingency plan for supplying water to your school (e. g., connecting to another well, buying bottled water, etc.) in case your well becomes contaminated.
- Ask the Fire Marshall to inspect your school to make sure chemicals and hazardous materials are stored properly. These could include cleaning supplies, paint, materials used in chemistry classes, and solvents used in industrial arts classes. Make sure there is a plan for storage, handling and disposal of these materials.
- Take advantage of your county's Clean Sweep programs for collecting hazardous wastes from your school.
- Look at the sampling results for your wells over the past several years and see if there are some potential problems that warrant attention. If there is a consistent pattern of detects or Maximum Contaminant Level violations for one or more contaminants, perhaps additional sampling or investigation of the source of the contamination is warranted. If detects have been sporadic or if you have had only one detect of a contaminant and recent results show no detects, then the threat of that contaminant may be low.

GROUNDWATER EDUCATION OPTIONS

- Incorporate information on groundwater protection into your curriculum. Explore the use of the Groundwater Study Guide (dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/gw/educate.htm), materials from the WDNR's EEK (Environmental Education for Kids) website (dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/index.htm), the green school program (dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/greenschools/), Project Wet (www.projectwet.org) or other environmental materials into your classes.
- Construct a rain garden (dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/nps/rg/index.htm) on your school grounds to promote infiltration of rainfall into the subsurface to recharge groundwater. Promote water conservation to reduce the amount of groundwater used by your school.
- Involve teachers, students, staff and parents in these activities, as a way of learning about the importance of groundwater protection. Work with other schools in these efforts.

Hopefully, this letter can help you and your school take this opportunity to develop a plan for protecting your school's water supply for the future. If you have questions, contact David Lindorff (877-268-9355 (toll free) or david.lindorff@dnr.state.wi.us) or one of the contacts identified in your assessment. Good luck in your groundwater protection efforts!